MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The issues specifically mentioned in the news-item in "The Hindu" dated 25th November, 1999 relate to (i) relief for drought and cyclone affected areas, and (ii) raising the custom duty on imported sugar to protect the interest of farmers and domestic industry.

With regard to (i), the State Government of Andhra Pradesh has submitted two Memoranda seeking assistance from the National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR). The Memorandum in the wake of drought conditions was received on 29.9.1999 seeking assistance of Rs.720.36 crore. The second Memorandum in the wake of October cyclone was received on 22.10.1999 for an assistance of Rs.40.00 crore. The National Calamity Relief Committee decided on 14.12.1999 to release an assistance of Rs.75.36 crore from NFCR. The Memorandum for cyclone relief is under consideration in accordance with the procedure laid down for the purpose.

Regarding (ii) above, customs duty on various commodities including sugar are adjusted from time to time depending on demand and supply situations. Government imposed 5% custom duty on import of sugar and countervailing duty of Rs. 850/- per tonne. This was raised from 5 per cent to 20 per cent on 14.1.1999 and further to 25 per cent in the budget for 1999-2000. In addition, with effect from 28.2.1999 it attracts a surcharge of 10 per cent (of basic duty) as well. Thus the present rate of duty applicable to sugar is 27.5 per cent along with continuance of countervailing duty of Rs. 850/- equivalent to excise duty leviable on domestic sugar.

Growth rate in Agricultural Sector

2439. SHRI AHMED PATEL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the average growth rate of agricultural sector for the ninth five year plan has been projected at 4.5 per cent; and

(b) if so, how Government propose to achieve the target?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS (SHRI ARUN SHOURIE): (a) Yes, Sir. Targetted annual growth rate in value of agricultural output in the Ninth Plan is 4.5 per cent per annum.

(b) Ninth Five Year Plan envisages regionally differentiated strategies for high productivity zone, low productivity and high potential zone, low productivity zone and ecologically fragile regions including Himalayan and desert areas for increasing production and productivity in Agriculture Sector. The priorities for the development of agriculture include conservation of land, water & biological resources, development of rainfed agriculture and minor irrigation, timely and adequate availability of inputs, increased flow of credit, larger public sector investment, enhanced support for research, effective transfer of technology, support for marketing infrastructure, export promotion, strengthening of health care services to livestocks and upgradation of genetic stock of cattle and buffaloes etc.

Report on settlement of Jhumia Tribal Families

2440. SHRI KHAGEN DAS: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Tripura sent any project report for settlement of 'Jhumia' tribal families based on rubber cultivation;

(b) if so, what was the estimated project cost; and

(c) how much of that projected cost, the State Government requested the Planning Commission to bear as a special assistance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF STATISTICS AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AND PUBLIC GRIEVANCES OF THE MINIS-